

On the right track to rules

Research

Roba Abbas is a PhD candidate at the School of Information Systems & Technology, Informatics, at the University of Wollongong. Her research looks at the impact of technology on different aspects of life.

I am researching the manner in which technology affects diverse areas and aspects of life, considering all dimensions from the technical through to the social factors.

In particular, my research project surrounds the theme of location-based services (LBS) regulation in Australia.

LBS provide a means of positioning, tracing and tracking individuals and/or objects, and are being adopted widely in business within Australia.

However, the associated regulatory environment has not been adequately considered and the implications of such services have not been measured.

The study of LBS regulation is interdisciplinary in nature, and requires an appreciation of the interaction across

fields of research, including emerging technologies, law, policy, and socio-ethics.

The research models a number of usability scenarios, which demonstrate the use of location-based services within different social settings and among various individuals within a given social network.

These scenarios will form the basis of a socio-technical design and consultation process, in which we will engage with LBS stakeholders.

We hope to collaborate with key members of the LBS value chain, in order to define the direction of the LBS industry, in a manner that will take in all stakeholder interests.

The consultation process is intended

to focus on the benefits and concerns associated with LBS adoption, in conjunction with future industry trends; technical and design implications; and the present and future regulatory environment in Australia.

The challenge will be attempting to achieve harmony between all areas, and ensuring that the interests of all parties involved are represented, and that a practical outcome is realised.

This particular study is part of a broader project, supported under the Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme.

We hope that in the next two years we are able to articulate and present our research results to the broader community in an accessible manner.



Roba Abbas is researching the regulations surrounding the tracing and tracking of people. Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO

Q & A

Will it save the world? It won't save the world, but I'm hoping it will help many people/stakeholders, be thought-provoking and contribute positively to research in this field.

Years spent trying: I'm quite new to this area, as this is the second year of my candidature. I do feel that the research will develop beyond the course of my studies, and that this is only a starting point.

Are you getting anywhere? The research is progressing at a quick pace, and we have been fortunate to present and publish selected outcomes over the past year, at international conferences.

Best part of your research? Being surrounded by the talented individuals that I collaborate with

on a daily basis, and having the opportunity to approach and contribute to an important research area, while developing and enhancing my research skills.

Funniest moment: There have been quite a few, most of which have involved using location tracking devices in new and interesting ways.

Ugliest moment: It is still early days, but I am hoping that I can avoid this moment.

Have you had a true "Eureka! I've found it!" experience? A few times, but have instantly realised that things are quite complex; a clear-cut "solution" is hard to come by, and achieving outcomes requires a gradual approach.

Has it made you rich? Not yet ...

What did you want to be when you were a kid? An historian, archaeologist or chef.

Has your career followed a straight line? Fortunately, it has followed a straight line, but has involved overcoming challenges.

What would you change? I would not change anything, as all experiences have been rich and added to my development, but there is always room for improvement and learning from fellow researchers and others.

Advice for young researchers: Determination, thoroughness and hard work are essential.

Next adventure: This is a work in progress.

Website for further information: <http://cbss.uow.edu.au>

Soft soil research a big winner for Ali

Award

University of Wollongong PhD student Ali Ghandeharoon has won the coveted 2010 NSW Research Students' Award of the Australian Geomechanics Society.

Ghandeharoon is studying civil engineering in the field of geomechanics. The award is for PhD candidates who are nearing the end of their research.

The judging panel, made up of academics and working engineers, received written submissions from PhD students from NSW universities and selected the best three entries.

The finalists then had to submit an extended peer-reviewed article that had to meet the publication standards of the *Australian Geomechanics Journal*. They also gave two oral presentations.

Ghandeharoon's entry was based on his PhD thesis, which looks at soft

soil stabilisation techniques.

The theoretical model developed as part of his research is at the cutting-edge having proven to be more accurate than any other available technique in the prediction of soil behaviour during and after drain installation in soft soils.

"Part of the criteria (for the award) was the relevance of the PhD topic to common geotechnical problems, and also the benefit of it for practical engineers," Ghandeharoon said.

Before coming to Wollongong in 2006, Ghandeharoon had received a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering and a Master of Science in Geotechnical Engineering, both from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran.

"My career has followed a straight line, getting more and more specialised," he said

"I love doing research and like the idea of transferring my knowledge to others."



University of Wollongong student Ali Ghandeharoon picked up a coveted award recently.



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